OBSERVATIONS

ON

Mr. ROUSSEAU's

NEW SYSTEM of EDUCATION:

With some

REMARKS

ON THE

DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS

Of that CELEBRATED WORK.

In a Letter to a FRIEND.

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BRITAN
NICVM

OBSERVATIONS, &c.

In a Letter to a Friend.

SIR,

IN obedience to your commands, I have tranſmitted to you Mr. *Rouſſeau*'s *Emile*, together with the two *Engliſh* tranſlations of it. You will probably think one of the latter ſufficient, but as you particularly deſired that of Mr. *N.* I thought proper, as well in juſtice to the original, as for your own convenience, to ſend with it, that of the Tranſlator of *Eloiſa:* not that I ſhould admit the validity of your excuſe for ſtanding in need of either, were the ſtile and manner of this writer leſs peculiar. In requiring me to give you my ſentiments on his work, however,

you enjoin me a taſk, which neither my leiſure nor abilities capacitate me to perform in a manner agreeable to my inclinations. As theſe, nevertheleſs, prompt me implicitly to obey every command of yours, I ſhall endeavour to oblige you with ſome few of thoſe general reflections that ſuggeſted themſelves on a peruſal of this celebrated performance.

You will wonder, doubtleſs, that I have not beſtowed ſome ſtudy on this maſter-piece of my favourite writer; as you are not to learn that *Rouſſeau* is an author whoſe works we muſt not read with the ſame indifference with which we uſually run through a political pamphlet or a news-paper. To tell you the truth, however, even my curioſity hath not been powerful enough to ſuperſede thoſe avocations, which have hitherto prevented my conſidering the ſeveral parts of this work with all the attention it deſerves.

You have yourſelf more than once obſerved, that it is with the pen of this writer as with that of his favourite *Monteſquieu, Il ne s'agit pas de faire lire, mais de faire penſer.* If this be the caſe, alſo, with reſpect to his former writings, it is ſo in a much greater degree with the preſent; wherein the nature of the ſubject gives him ſo many opportunities of indulging his excentric genius, by launching forth into thoſe ſingularities, for which he is ſo greatly admired on the one hand, and cenſured on the other.

Cenſure and admiration, you will ſay, are equally attendants on great abilities: they are ſo; and thoſe who think differently from the majority of mankind, whether right or wrong, muſt remain totally ſilent, if they fear to encounter oppoſition or to incur obloquy. It is no wonder then if a theoriſt, who profeſſedly differs in opinion from almoſt every body, and combats the moſt general cuſtoms, as ridiculous

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and abſurd, ſhould be treated by ſome as a dangerous projector, and by others as a paradoxical viſionary.

Unthinking minds view nothing but through the medium of prejudice; and thus, while

—all looks yellow to the jaundic'd eye,

they condemn indiſcriminately every thing that carries with it the appearance of innovation.

Bigotry, again, is a ſtranger to the voice of reaſon, while thoſe who might influence it by their authority, *viz.* the clergy, chuſe not to clear up, and much leſs to propagate any body's paradoxes but their own. In this perhaps *they* may be right; it cannot ſure but be egregiouſly wrong, however, in thoſe, who are inveſted with the authority of government, and are profeſſedly the guardians of ſociety, to perſecute a man for inveſtigating the means of correcting the natural and moral defects of mankind. God knows the inefficacy of civil

civil inſtitutions, as they ſtand at preſent in any part of *Europe*, and with how little force either religion or laws oppoſe the general corruption of manners. And yet we ſee an enquiry into the cauſe of this inefficacy, and the means of remedying it, treated with the greateſt marks of reſentment, as well by the liberal police of *France*, as the *free* republics of *Geneva*, and of the united provinces of *Holland*.

Would not one be apt to think, from theſe circumſtances, that ſuch governments have not the good of mankind ſo much in view as is pretended; or that the influence of civil and religious inſtitutions is ſufficiently prevalent over the licentiouſneſs of manners!

At the ſame time it is remarkable that this work is ſtigmatized by ſome with being calculated to weaken the influence of religion on the minds of men, and to undermine the foundations of all civil government. I do not find, indeed, that it is charged with having any di-

rect tendency to the propagation of vice and immorality: which, let me tell you, is ſomething of a wonder, as this imputation generally cloſes every charge of this nature.

That Mr. *Rouſſeau* does not treat the characters of either civil or eccleſiaſtical governors with the politeneſs of a courtier, or the obſequiouſneſs of a ſycophant, is very certain; neither doth he pay that diſtant reverence to the crown or the mitre, as might be required from the cringing ſlave of a deſpotic prince, and an implicit believer in the church. For my part, however, I do not find that he advances any thing unbecoming the reſpectful ſubject of an equitable ſovereign, or a faithful believer in the rational tenets of true religion. And, how a writer can be ſaid to undermine the foundations of civil government, who takes ſo much pains to inveſtigate, and ſettle on a firm baſis, thoſe of ſociety, appears to me more paradoxical than any thing I have met with in his book.

If

If to explode the little arts and mean reſources of partial and ill-founded adminiſtrations, be conſtrued into a deſign to undermine the foundations of civil government, we muſt never expect to ſee politics reduced to a ſcience; but, while the meaner concerns of life are duly arranged in order, and conducted with the utmoſt regularity, the government of mankind muſt continue under the influence of adventitious reſources, and the artificial management of local ſhifts and temporary expedients.

With reſpect to the affair of religion, I am well aware, that your ſincere regard for its intereſt, and full conviction of its temporal, as well as eternal importance, will awaken ſome alarm for your favourite author. You will be apt to think, on a firſt peruſal of the Curate's creed, that Mr. *Rouſſeau* hath carried his ſcepticiſm too far. You know him too well, however, to condemn any thing in him too haſtily.

I muſt caution you alſo not to be miſled by the blundering and unneceſſary excuſes made for him by Mr. *N*———, his tranſlator. I ſay his tranſlator, becauſe he hath forgot himſelf ſo far as to permit his name to ſtand in the title-page; but we may certainly ſay on this occaſion, as on many others, in this empirical age,

Fronti nulla fides.

You know ſomething of the mercenary arts of our *London* bookſellers, and the illiberal connivances of their ſtated authors. It is to theſe we owe the barbarous murder of the late beautiful performance of *Helvetius*; it is from theſe our author himſelf hath received more than one execrable inſult; and to theſe it is owing that our public prints bear monthly witneſs how poor *Voltaire* lies bleeding under the mercileſs hands of the moſt cruel of all literary aſſaſſins. The fame of authors is ſufficiently confined by the ſhort duration and changeable ſtate of the language in which they write; it is, therefore, a ſtrange me-

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thod which writers of one nation take to depreciate thoſe of another, and blaſt their laurels, while yet green, by wretched tranſlations of their works.

I muſt do Mr. *N.* the juſtice, however, to confeſs, I cannot help acquitting him of being actually guilty of the many groſs errors and ſcandalous miſrepreſentations, to be met with in the verſion which bears the ſanction of his name.—But to return to his excuſes for Rouſſeau. You will obſerve that, apologizing, in his (the tranſlator's) preface, for what he calls the exceptionable parts of the work, he has the following paſſage. "Not that we ſuppoſe our author himſelf to be a diſbeliever of revealed religion; but, as we before obſerved, he is ſometimes rather too flighty, and unguarded in his expreſſions. But if we look into the parallel he draws in the ſecond volume between Chriſt and Socrates, it is impoſſible to conceive that a perſon who gives ſo beautiful a character of the ſacred founder of Chriſtianity, can be an enemy to his religion."

You will read with pleaſure the parallel referred to, which ends with the following remarkable expreſſions. "Yes, if Socrates lived and died like a philoſopher, Chriſt lived and died like a God. Shall we ſay that the evangelical hiſtory was invented at pleaſure? My friend, inventions are not made after that manner; and Socrates's hiſtory, of which no body entertains any doubt, is not ſo well atteſted as that of Chriſt."

Thus far the apologiſt is candid and conſiſtent; but the misfortune is, that the abovementioned parallel is contained in the Curate's creed; in a note to ſome other paſſages of which creed, the ſame tranſlator tells us that, "the author does not here deliver his own ſentiments, but thoſe of a modern deiſt, repreſented by the prieſt of Savoy."

Now, Sir, if the author does not deliver his own ſentiments in one part of this creed, I am perſuaded you muſt be of opinion, that few of his readers will be ſo favourable to him as to think he

he delivers his own ſentiments in another part of it: ſo that this tranſlator, by being over ſolicitous to exculpate his author, when there was no occaſion for it, invalidates his own plea; the apology in this note deſtroying the force of that in his preface.

Some perſons have underſtood Mr. *Rouſſeau* literally, with reſpect to the writer of this part of the work, and have imagined it to come from another pen; but be this as it may, as our author has thought proper to inſert it, he will be expected to ſtand in ſome meaſure accountable for its good or evil tendency.

In my opinion, however, he wants no apology for any thing he hath advanced in the character of the Savoyard curate, (or as this tranſlator calls him, *the Vicar of Savoy*; a pretty conſiderable *vicarage* truly!) My reaſon is, that he expreſsly tells us he propoſes his *doubts* and not his *ſentiments*. In which view, it is certainly to the advantage of Chriſtianity,

ſtianity, to have the objections that may be raiſed againſt it, ſet in their ſtrongeſt light, in order to give room for a full and ſatisfactory ſolution of them.

Mr. *N.* indeed, goes ſo far (evidently on his former motive) as to ſay, that the arguments our author advances, contain "nothing new; nothing but what has been often anſwered by our own divines:" it is ſhrewdly to be ſuſpected, however, that when arguments often anſwered, come to be again inſiſted on by men of ſenſe and genius, they are not as yet ſatisfactorily anſwered at all. Hence it might be worthy the enquiry of ſome of our ableſt divines, whether ſuch anſwers as appear unſatisfactory to men of Mr. *Rouſſeau*'s abilities, be really ſuch as the honour and intereſt of the Chriſtian cauſe require?

But even ſuppoſing them concluſive, and that Mr. *Rouſſeau* cannot ſee the force of them, ſurely no perſon of candour will charge a man with believing or maintaining propoſitions, which he lays down as dubious.

If

If he had made an unfair repreſentation of the caſe; if he had calumniated either Chriſtianity or its profeſſors, his adverſaries might have had ſome plea for exclaiming againſt him: but the contrary is notorious; and the manner in which he treats the Holy Scriptures, and the ſacred character of our Saviour, is ſo pious and reverential*, that nothing can be more injurious, than the reflections which ſome fanatical bigots have thrown out againſt him.

The arguments of ſuch perſons are indeed unanſwerable on any principles of common-ſenſe or reaſon: but I need not caution you againſt being influenced by the prejudices of thoſe, whoſe injuſtice is to be equalled only by their abſurdity.

Read, then, and judge for yourſelf; but I muſt undeceive you as to the aſ-

* I acknowledge to you, (ſays the pretended curate) that the majeſty of the ſcriptures aſtoniſh me, and the ſanctity of the goſpel fills me with rapture.

ſiſtance you expect from the tranſlation of Mr. *N.* which, little as you may retain of the *French*, will ſerve, for the moſt part, only to miſlead you, and prevent your underſtanding the author; particularly in thoſe paſſages where any difficulty in the conſtruction of the language of the original might make you require the help of a tranſlation.

When you may be at a loſs, however, in this reſpect, you will do well to conſult the verſion *by the Tranſlator of Eloiſa*; which, tho' it bears ſome marks of too much haſte in the execution, is never, as far as I have yet found, unjuſt to the ſenſe of the original. You will peruſe it alſo with greater pleaſure, as the taſte and ſpirit of the author is happily imitated, in the ſtile and manner of the tranſlator.

I know you have entertained a very reſpectable opinion of Mr. *N.* in this capacity; in juſtification, therefore, of the cenſure I paſs on the preſent inſtance (if it be ſuch) of his abilities this way,

way, I ſhall point out ſome few of the many egregious blunders it abounds with. For a ſufficient number of theſe, I need only turn over the laſt volume of his performance. That you may be able alſo to form a comparative notion of the merit of the other tranſlation which I recommend, I ſhall place the paſſages of both in ſeparate columns, with the original annexed.

Mr. N.

And finding, that to believe in the deity, he muſt renounce the judgment he had formed of the divine majeſty—.

The tranſlator of Eloiſa.

And, finding that, in order to believe in God, it was neceſſary to give up that underſtanding he hath beſtowed on us—.

Rouſſeau.

Et trouvant que pour croire en Dieu il falloit renoncer au jugement qu'on avoit recu de lui———

Mr. N.

I ſhould even be aſhamed to make too great a diſplay of my riches; and I ſhould always think I heard the man who envies me, and whoſe heart I would willingly break with my contemptuous behaviour, whiſpering to his neighbours: *See, what a great rogue is there! how afraid he is to be known!*

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

I ſhould even be aſhamed to make too great a parade of my wealth, and ſhould think I always heard the envious man, whom I mortified by my ſplendor, whiſpering in the ear of his neighbour; *how fearful is that knave leſt he ſhould not be taken for what he is!*

Rouſſeau.

Rouſſeau.

J'aurois même quelque honte d'étaler trop ma richeſſe, et je croirois toujours voir l'envieux, que j'écraſerois de mon faſte, dire à ſes voiſins à l'oreille ; voila un fripon qui a grand' peur de n'être pas connu pour tel!

Mr. N.

There is a pain, but no agreeable ſenſation, in thus diſturbing the order of nature, in plucking its unripe fruits, which it gives involuntarily, and with curſe and regret. —— *Vol.* ii. *P.* 156.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

There is ſome difficulty, but no taſte, in thus diſturbing the order of nature, in wreſting from her thoſe involuntary productions which ſhe yields with regret. ——— *Vol.* iii. *P.* 245.

Rouſſeau.

Il y a de la peine et non du goût a troubler ainſi l'ordre de la nature, a lui arracher des productions involontaires qu'elle donne à regret——Vol. iii. p. 324.

Mr. N.

I know no fate more dreadful, than that of a pretty woman at Paris, next to that of an agreeable little fellow, who dangles after her, and who being metamorphoſed into a female by his indolence, is thus doubly removed from his ſtate, the vanity of being looked upon as a man of a large fortune, enabling him to endure the moſt tedious and moſt melancholy hours, that ever human creature paſſed upon earth. *Vol.* ii. 165.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

I know no ſituation in life ſo miſerable, as that of a fine woman at Paris, except it be that of the agreeable coxcomb her follower, who, from the vanity of being thought ſucceſsful in his amours, ſupports the tedious length of the moſt melancholy days that ever were paſſed by an human creature. *Vol.* iii. 257.

Rouſſeau.

Rouſſeau.

Je ne connois point de ſort plus affreux que celui d'une jolie femme de Paris, après celle du petit agréable qui s'attache à elle, qui changé de même en femme oiſive, s'eloigne ainſi doublement de ſon etat, et à qui la vanité d'etre homme à bonnes fortunes, fait ſupporter la longueur des plus triſtes jours qu'ait jamais paſſé creature humaine. Vol. iii. p. 342.

You will obſerve, that the tranſlator of *Eloiſa* has omitted the circumſtance of the metamorphoſis in this ſentence, I ſuppoſe, becauſe he conceived it too quaint, if not altogether abſurd, and quite unneceſſary. Mr. *N.* with more fidelity, tho' I think with leſs judgment and taſte, has ſtuck cloſer to his author, and has made him guilty of the ſtrangeſt nonſenſe imaginable. Is it poſſible that Mr. *N.* himſelf could miſtake the vanity of being thought a favourite with the ladies, for that of being reckoned a man of large fortune?

Mr. N.	*Tranſlator of Eloiſa.*
It is but juſt that this ſex ſhould give us a ſhare in the pain of thoſe evils of which we are the cauſe. *Vol.* ii. 198.	It is juſt that this ſex ſhould partake of the ſufferings which ariſe from thoſe evils it hath cauſed us. *Vol.* iv. 31.

Rouſſeau.

Il eſt juſte que ce ſexe partage le peine de maux qu'il nous a cauſés. Vol. iv. p. 47.

Mr. N.

I am not ignorant that the women, who have openly taken their reſolution in regard to a certain point, pretend to value themſelves on this freedom, and ſwear that they have nothing elſe worthy of notice. *Vol.* ii. 227.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

I know that thoſe women who have publickly avowed their conduct on a certain delicate occaſion, pretend to value themſelves on their frankneſs, and proteſt that they are endowed with every eſtimable quality, that one excepted. *Vol.* iv. 72.

Rouſſeau.

Je ſais que les femmes qui ont ouvertement pris leur parti ſur un certain point, pretendent bien ſe faire valoir de cette franchiſe, et jurent qu' a cela pres il n'y a rien d'eſtimable qu' on ne trouve en elles. Vol. iv. p. 109.

I do not admire either of the Engliſh verſions of this paſſage, nor indeed the conſtruction of the original; you will ſee, however, that Mr. *N.* hath totally preverted the author's ſenſe.

Mr. N.

No man, unleſs he be a crowned head, can look for a wife in all parts of the world. *Vol.* ii. 268.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

A man, unleſs he is a ſovereign, cannot chuſe a wife out of every rank. —— *Vol.* iv. 120.

Un homme, a moins qu'il ne ſoit monarque, ne peut pas chercher une femme dans tous les etats——

The context will ſhew the abſurdity of Mr. *N.*'s tranſlation.

Mr.

Mr. N.

We found them in ſeparate beds, Emilius having taken care to ſend one; and there were people to attend them, for he had alſo made that proviſion. But they were both ſo deſtitute, that they ſuffered as much through want of neceſſaries, as from their painful ſituation. Sophia calls for an apron of the poor woman's, and lays it under her; ſhe does the ſame by the man, and with her ſoft hand explores every part of the bed that was capable of hurting them, and places their bodies in an eaſier poſture. *Vol.* ii. 334.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

We find them in different beds; Emilius had ſent one with people to give them aſſiſtance. But nevertheleſs both lay ſo uneaſily, that they ſuffered as much from their painful ſituation, as from their accidents. With her ſoft and light hand, Sophia removed every thing which hurt them, and placed their limbs in an eaſier poſture. *Vol.* iv. 201.

Rouſſeau.

On les trouve dans deux lits ſéparés: Emile en avait fait apporter un: on trouve autour du monde pour les ſoulager; Emile y avoit pourvu. Mais au ſurplus tous deux ſont ſi mal en ordre, qu'ils ſouffrent autant du mal-aiſe que de leur etat. Sophia ſe fait donner un tablier de la bonne femme, et va la ranger dans ſon lit; elle en fait enſuite autant a l' homme; ſa main douce et legere ſait aller chercher tout ce qui les bleſſe, et faire poſer plus mollement leur membres endoloris. Vol. iv. p. 313.

You ſee, that in rendering this paſſage, Mr. *N.* by following too ſervilely his

his author, has made a long and blundering affair of what the tranſlator of *Eloiſa* has given in a few words. It is true the latter hath totally omitted the good woman's apron, it had been better alſo if the author had done ſo too, unleſs he had found ſome uſe for it; his ſilence on which head has lead the other tranſlator into the terrible miſtake of ſuppoſing *Sophia* converted it into a pair of ſheets. Is it poſſible Mr. *N.* could tranſlate this paſſage, or be ſo regardleſs of common decency, ſuppoſing that thro' inattention he had not remarked that the relative article *la* could never refer to *tablier*, a noun of a different gender?

Mr. N.

But in this part of the world, as we cannot do without a ſocial life, and it is become neceſſary for men to devour one another, it is the intereſt of each to frequent thoſe countries where our ſpecies is the moſt numerous. This is the reaſon why there is always ſuch a concourſe of foreigners at Rome, at Paris, and at London.

Tranſlator of Eloiſa.

But as for us, to whom a ſocial life is become neceſſary, and who cannot live without preying on our fellow-creatures, it is our intereſt to frequent the moſt populous countries. This is the reaſon why all the world flock to Rome, Paris and London. It is in capital cities that human ſacrifices are ſo frequent and

ſo

London. It is in great capitals that human blood is eaſieſt to purchaſe. *Vol.* ii. 359.

so eaſily effected. *Vol.* iv. 231.

Rouſſeau.

Mais pour nous à qui ne pouvons plus nous paſſer manger des hommes, l'interêt de chacun de nous eſt de frequenter les pays où l'on en trouve le plus. Voila pourquoi tout afflue à Rome, à Paris, à Londres. C'eſt toujours dans les capitales que le ſang humain ſe vend a meilleur marché.

From the different verſions of this paſſage, you may ſee what wretched work is made by a mere literal attention to the words of an author; and that taſte and judgment are no leſs requiſite in a tranſlator than an original writer.

It would be almoſt an endleſs taſk, however, to exemplify all the defects and errors of Mr. *N*'s pretended tranſlation. The above may be ſufficient to convince you of what I advanced, that, however incompetent a reader you may be of the *French* original, you will underſtand it better than this *Engliſh* verſion.

You will ſufficiently perceive, alſo, that, ſetting aſide the miſrepreſentation of the ſenſe, nothing can be more groſs

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and inelegant than the language. The modeſt and delicate *Sophia* is ſaid to *joke* on a certain occaſion, when ſhe is repreſented covered with bluſhes. We are told *Emilius*, when thoughtful, is in a *brown ſtudy*; the word *learning* is with great vulgarity conſtantly uſed inſtead of *teaching*. *Oh, mother, mother!* *Sophia* cries out, like a great blubbering country-wench, at the ſame time that ſhe is addreſſing her on a ſubject the moſt exquiſitely refined and ſentimental.

It would be needleſs, as you are now poſſeſſed of the book, to enumerate any more of theſe inſtances of negligence, ignorance, and want of taſte; as by looking into it yourſelf, with the leaſt degree of attention, you muſt be ſoon fully convinced that Mr. *N.* could have no other hand in this tranſlation, than that of lending his name, to countenance a wretched piece of literary journey-work, as unworthy of the pretended copyiſt, as injurious to a maſterly original.

F I N I S.